

ABSTRACT

A machine requiring periodic maintenance, such as a vending machine, is retrofitted to include an alert system for notifying a machine operator that the machine requires servicing. The alert system includes one or more sensors to detect default conditions, a voice recorder for storing one or more voice messages corresponding to default conditions, a transmitter for transmitting the voice messages to the machine operator, and a trigger connected to the one or more sensors and the transmitter for selectively initiating the transmission of appropriate voice messages in accordance with predetermined parameters. The voice messages are transmitted over the public switched telephone network (PSTN) to be heard by the machine operator or stored on the machine operator's voice answering system. The transmitter may be a simple auto dialer connected by wires to a nearby phone jack. However, in a preferred embodiment, the transmitter is constructed in similar manner to the transmitter of a cordless telephone in which the monitored machine includes a short range transmitter operating at 900 MHz or 2200 MHz for transmitting a voice message to a corresponding receiver connected to a nearby phone jack. The voice message is then transmitted over the PSTN to the machine operator. The alert system of the present invention may also include a clock connected to the trigger for causing the voice messages to be transmitted only a predetermined times of the day.